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GOTHIC TAPESTRIES ON LOAN

TAPESTRIES of the highest order are to be seen in Wing H through the kindness of Edson Bradley in lending to the Museum four rare and precious Gothic hangings—pieces that are unsurpassed by any of their kind. These were formerly in his house at Washington, D. C., which is now turned over to the American Red Cross for war relief work.

Although all date from the fifteenth century, the most important is perhaps the very large one hanging on the east wall of Gallery H 14, representing scenes from the Siege of Troy. The Trojan War was a popular theme among weavers in those days, when wars were more frequent though less hideous than today, and there still exist two incomplete sets¹ and several single hangings² of this subject in European collections. Most fortunately, too, eight small color sketches for this series, "petit patrons" from which the larger cartoons, "grand patrons," were made, have been preserved and are now in the Louvre. These do not follow the Homeric legend, however, but a mediaeval version as given in the Roman de Troie of Benoit de Sainte More (1184). Mr. Bradley's tapestry shows three scenes separated by an architectural framework: The Arrival of Ulysses and Diomedes at the Gate of Troy, Their Reception by King Priam, and Achilles and Telephus at the Battle of Messene. The multiplicity of figures, the elaborate detail, and the generous display of patterned textiles give an effect of great splendor, further enhanced by the colors in which the whole is woven—colors at once brilliant and mellow, which have acquired that rare and subtle quality only to be found in century-old hangings. In place of a figured border there are broad inscribed bands, French above and Latin below, describing the scenes represented. The tapestry was made in the second half of the fifteenth century, probably about

1470, in northern France or possibly at Tournai, then a Burgundian town.

More engaging in its conception and even finer in color is the allegorical Burgundian tapestry in the same gallery opposite the Siege of Troy. This represents primarily a princely court with the Prince of Malice throned amid his courtier Vices, and to the left, outside the precincts of the court, the towered and warded castle of the maiden Virtues—Pruia (?), Atempérance, Carité, Humilité, Castité, Sobrité, and Bonté—the first three clad in armor, with Charity carrying her flaming arrows. In greater splendor are the Vices—Dépit, Discor, Malebouche, Orgoeul (holding a mirror to reflect the solemn visage of the prince), Flaterie, Gloutonie, Trayson, Yre, Hypocrisie, Envie, and others. Most of these are richly dressed in the sumptuous fabrics which Florence and other great Italian cities produced in the early Renaissance times, and large gleaming jewels of bright colors stud the throne and robe of the prince. Quite droll is the little dog in the foreground, the embodiment of meekness and innocence, who seems, naturally enough, not in the least disturbed by the wickedness of his surroundings.

Another tapestry, in Gallery H 13, shows a characteristic form of amusement of the middle ages—a falconing party—this one said to represent Charles VI of France, with Queen Isabel and Odette de Champdiver, a favorite, who was faithful and kind to the poor king after he became subject to fits of insanity.³ But whether or not it is Le Roi Bien Aimé, and there seems to be little evidence to support this theory, the tapestry is of the first half of the fifteenth century, and of Flemish workmanship. There are eight figures in all, some evidently people of the court and others of humbler origin, all set in an enchanting forest of holly, oak, and laurel trees, carpeted with violets, strawberries—blossoms and berries both—heartsease, daffodils, harebells, cyclamen, daisies, bluettes, teasel, broom, plantain, mullen, fritillary, and clove gillyflowers.

³ It was to divert and occupy the king's mind at this time that playing cards were introduced into France.

¹ At the Palais de Justice, Issoire, Auvergne, and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

² Schouvaloff Collection, Petrograd; Cathedral of Zamora, Spain; Château of Sully-sur-Loire and the church in Montereau, France.

Of similar character is Mr. Bradley's fourth tapestry, a French hanging of the late fifteenth century. A lord and lady playing chess occupy the central place, and in the corners are single figures—a hunter with bow and arrow, a gamekeeper, a man with a rolling hoop, and a page carrying a banner. Filling the intervening spaces are orange trees and flowers in great profusion, among which hide conies, quail, pheasants, and other birds.

All of Mr. Bradley's tapestries are in excellent condition and have suffered less from the ravages of time and bad restorations than most Gothic pieces. Together with the set of the Seven Sacraments and the *Baillée des Roses* which the Museum owns, they exemplify, in a manner that leaves little or nothing to be desired, the golden age of tapestry.

R. A. P.

RECENT ACCESSIONS

RECENT GIFTS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF PRINTS. During the past summer the Museum has received as gifts for the Department of Prints about three hundred and eighty single prints and seven books and pamphlets containing prints. The items thus acquired are of most different kinds, ranging in period and in mood from the *Sphaera Mundi* of 1485 to one of the two sets of lithographs of Mme. Yvette Guilbert by Toulouse Lautrec. The *Sphaera Mundi*, presented by Paul J. Sachs, is a piece of the good, sound printing that Erhard Ratdolt of Augsburg did during his Venetian period, and is remarkable not only for its beautiful woodcut initial capitals, but for the fact that several of its illustrations are printed in color, the earliest recorded examples of pictures so printed. The lithographs of Toulouse Lautrec, presented by Mrs. H. Wolf, are excellent examples of his mordant and highly personal art, and are probably among the more important prints of the end of the last century. Marvelously drawn and bold in conception, they represent a side of modern art that must be reckoned with in the future.

Among the more delightful things received are three books, Verdizotti's *Cento Favole Morali* of 1577, a *Legendario di Sancti* of 1514, and Moritz von Schwind's *Almanach von Radierungen* of 1844, the gifts of an anonymous donor. The *Cento Favole* is doubtless one of the most charming illustrated books of the late Italian

Renaissance, its many full-page woodcuts having been designed by Giovanni Maria Verdizotti, an amateur draughtsman and poet who composed the rhyming versions of Aesop by which they are accompanied. Verdizotti's designs are so good that, notwithstanding the preface states that he made them, many persons have thought they came from the hand of Titian himself. Several of them are especially well known, among them the quite important Oak and the Reed, one of the very best landscapes to be found in an Italian print. The *Legendario*, in addition to the many impressions it contains from Venetian Renaissance blocks of the period just before and just after 1500, has among its illustrations sixty woodcuts from the famous edition of Voragine printed at Paris in 1489 by Jean du Pré, one of the fathers of French typography. Being illustrations to the *Golden Legend*, the cuts, almost without exception, portray the violent ends to which all good Christians come in that most delightful book. But so far from being repellent they are positively charming in their gaiety and pleasant manner. The *Almanach*, as its title declares, is illustrated with etchings by Schwind, one of the most captivating German artists of the last century. Their peculiar grace and delicacy are those which one associates with the lighter side of Viennese life in the early 'forties, the days when Vienna too had its pleasant land of Bohemia.

Grenville Lindall Winthrop has pre-